

ing will be thankfully received by the Treasurer, Arthur Asptel, Esq., Clapton-square; William Rhodes, Esq., Ball's Pond; J. R. D. Tysen, Esq., Upper Clapton, or by us.

"We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

"WILKINSON & CONNOLD, Secretaries."

PATENT OROPHOLITHE.

THIS is a new composition which has for some time been under our observation, though not so much so with the public. There is a terrible mania nowadays for inventing learned or far-fetched names and designations, and this, which is meant to be denominated a roof-stone, is complicated into Greek, to say as much under the term Oropholithe. However we will not quarrel with the word, so that there be utility in the material. For roofs alone it is not merely applicable, though as a cheap substitute for lead, zinc, copper, and even slate, it is in this respect an eligible product, but it goes farther, and will almost provoke a smile when we announce it for walls and ceilings. We have for ourselves preferred to denominate it a portable stucco, and in this respect we think its promise of greater import than many people imagine; of course the invention, like all new inventions, has not attained its perfect character, and we should think it will, like every thing of extensive application, be a considerable time before it does; but at present it has been brought into requisition, as the advertisement states, for various classes of building. For instance, there is in the Regent's Park a lodge to the Royal Botanic Gardens, the roof and walls of which are of oropholithe sheeting; and for such purposes, for moveable or temporary erections, for garden-houses generally, for emigrant dwellings, and the like, it is, in our opinion, admirably adapted.

The composition of the material is not exactly known to us, but it has very much the appearance of mastic plaster. Litharge, sand, and oil, we believe, are the main ingredients; these are laid upon a coarse canvas on both sides, so that it resembles much in texture and substance a stout oil-cloth, for which material, by the way, we must observe it is a good substitute, and being stouter, and more calculated to resist the wear of walking, besides being less liable to decay and attacks of insects, vermin, &c., will be in most respects superior to oil-cloth.

It will be understood, then, by our readers, that the material is prepared in sheets, and is sold at so much per yard. For covering flat or other-roofs boards are used, in the same way as for lead, &c. We know of one instance wherein it is applied for a flat roof in a difficult situation, round and upon a lantern skylight; and of another where the facility of its adaptation was esteemed of great consequence to the owner of the premises; a large flat roof covered with lead was yielding, and otherwise suffering injury from the weight of the material; we recommended to take off the lead and cover with the oropholithe, by which a great saving was shewn, the lead being worth considerably more than the cost of the oropholithe, and the weight or pressure in like proportion greater. Old copper roofs, which cost so much in repairs and tinkering, may be exchanged in like manner, at great advantage to the owner.

One great advantage in the laying down, is the readiness by which the joints are formed; two edges being brought together, a soldering, if one may so term it, is effected by the simple use of the mastic itself, which unites the two together, sets rapidly, and is as firm as the prepared sheets.

In constructing houses as we have described or hinted at, upright divisions or quarterings of wood, or it may be, scantlings of iron, may be set up to form the skeleton of the structure, rebated or otherwise to receive the sheets of the oropholithe stretching across like a panel of wainscot, and smaller mouldings applied to cover the joints, bedded in the material. By this means a very ornamental character may be obtained; and it is applicable, in like manner, for interior partitions.

But as a vehicle for painting, we regard it with peculiar favour; and when it is considered that the most ornamental character can be given to it, even in the workshop, and so that the plastering of our rooms may be actually prepared, dried, and painted even be-

fore the roof of the edifice is reared—in the same manner as old wainscot linings were dealt with—so considered, we say, it has peculiar claims and recommendations, which the ingenious mind will not be slow to detect.

In this time of the agitation of a question which we predict will have an immense influence on building art, namely, the use of fresco painting in the new houses of parliament, this oropholithe will play its subordinate part, and enable those humbler aspirants to the enjoyment of artistic skill, as developed on walls and ceilings, to secure their measure of gratification in painted plaster-work. Artists, too, may rejoice in the supply of a new vehicle, or rather, the house decorator may calculate upon an elevation in the scale of his class, since he has presented to him a medium upon which he can at all seasons be employed; and this is very important, in many senses. Portable panels of oropholithe, painted, dried, and seasoned, before being applied in the building, will be a comfort to occupants, and will raise the material and the art into great request.

FIRE INSURANCE.

TRANSITIONS from fancied security to irremediable deprivation are amongst the keenest misfortunes we can suffer, and FIRE with its three ministering causes, *design, negligence, and accident*, the most active and relentless agent in inflicting them; as a common and fearful enemy it requires to be hedged in and fenced about by its antipathies, by bounds which repress its progress, and these are at hand in the resources of modern building art, aided by improved adaptations of metals, cements, and stuccoes. If on any subject we would indulge in repetition, it is on that which relates to the prevention of extensive fires, but our hints have already met the eye of our readers (No. 8), and we await a more forward movement in remedial measures before we resume them; in the meantime, the following extract from the *Times*, and the accompanying petition of the mercantile community of Liverpool, shew the excitement prevailing, and which is unfortunately kept up by a continuation of incendiary attempts:—

"The great interest which is excited at Liverpool by the late fires is shewn by a large meeting, held on Monday, for the sole purpose of taking into consideration preventive measures against the recurrence of the calamity. The meeting was adjourned to afford time for further deliberation, but the motion for the presentation of a petition to the House of Commons was carried. A few weeks ago, a bill was introduced into the house for the future protection of property in Liverpool from fire. This bill was, however, withdrawn before a second reading, the reason set forth for its withdrawal being that it was first expedient to try the experiment of a better supply of water under the bill of the Highway Commissioners. The danger appearing to the merchants too imminent to admit of further delay, they determined it should be ended, and the following is a copy of the petition:—

"TO THE HON. THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

"The humble petition of the several Commercial Associations of Liverpool,

"Sheweth,—That the frequency and magnitude of fires in warehouses have greatly increased within the borough, occasioning, during a short period, the loss of an enormous amount of property.

"That the extent of the losses is mainly to be attributed to the defective construction and management of the warehouses; the absence of all classification of goods and merchandise; the contiguity of buildings in which hazardous trades are carried on, and of small tenements, timber yards, and cooperages; and to the defective, and in some instances, total want of supplies of water.

"Your petitioners are aware that for the better supply of water a bill is in progress through Parliament, submitted by the commissioners for paving and sewerage the town of Liverpool."

"That the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses of Liverpool submitted a bill in Parliament, with a view to remedy the defect in the construction and management of warehouses, entitled, "A Bill for the better Protection of Property in the Borough of Liverpool from Fire," containing provisions calculated greatly to increase the protection of warehouses against that calamity; the prosecution of which, however, was postponed in order to afford time for the further consideration of its provisions, and it has not yet been read a second time.

"That fires to an alarming extent have taken

place since, shewing the urgent necessity of proceeding forthwith with the proposed bill, as they have demonstrated that had the measures of protection and prevention sought for by it been in operation, the calamity might have been greatly mitigated, if not averted, and that without some such provisions as it contains being enacted, no supply of water, however abundant, will guard warehouses and their contents from the ravages of fire.

"That the rates of insurance against fire have been advanced to a most alarming and burdensome extent, thereby increasing the charge of holding produce and merchandise to such a degree, as is calculated to cause a diversion of trade from this port to other places, where a better construction and management of warehouses prevail.

"Your petitioners therefore pray, that the mayor, aldermen, and burgesses of the borough of Liverpool, may be allowed to proceed with the bill, for the better Protection of Property in the borough of Liverpool from Fire, the consideration of which has been postponed, and for such purpose that the second reading thereof may be permitted, and that the bill may be referred to a committee of your hon. house, and that time may be allowed by your hon. house for the report of the committee thereon.

"And your petitioners will ever pray, &c."

Liverpool, where losses to an immense amount have rapidly succeeded each other, comes forward with a petition to Parliament for inquiry and remedy against the present insecurity in which property is deemed to be within that great commercial port. It was to be expected that sufferers to so great an extent should be the first to invite and advocate preventive measures; but though calamity has, in these instances, fallen heaviest upon Liverpool, the same liability, in proportion to extent, exists in every port and city of the empire. Partial measures will, by no means, meet the exigency now apparent and acknowledged. The view taken by the commercial associations will be gathered from the above petition, and the remedy adopted by the insurance offices of indemnifying themselves by increased rates of premium is already in operation; we may, in fact, contemplate great alteration in the system of insurance generally.

With respect to risks against fire, the plan upon which they are undertaken is obscure, and the grounds for calculation unstable; the premiums which, for so long a period, had been considered sufficient, are no longer so, and presently it may be that no fixed rate will prevail, but that, as in marine insurance, a special contract will be required, the offices apportioning a premium according to present conception of the nature of the risk.

AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES.

IN the year 1561, the estate of Versailles became the property of Martial de Loménie, finance-secretary to Charles IX., and he continued to possess it for a long time. L'Etoile, in his *Memoirs* (tom. i. p. 26), informs us that Catherine de' Medici caused him to be strangled, in order to bestow the estate upon the Comte de Retz. This is not perfectly authenticated, though it bears some appearance of truth. But, however this may be, it is certain that Albert de Gondi, Comte de Retz, one of those Florentines who followed the fortunes of Catherine into France, became proprietor of the estate of Versailles. His son Jean François de Gondi, archbishop of Paris, and uncle of the Cardinal de Retz, sold it to Louis XIII. The following is an extract from the contract of sale:—

"The 8th April, 1632, the most illustrious and reverend Jean François de Gondi, archbishop of Paris, seigneur of Versailles, now present, agrees to sell, yield up, &c., to Louis XIII., Messire Charles de l'Aubespine, keeper of the seals, and Messire Antoine Ruscé, Marquis d'Effiat, superintendent of finances, accepting on the part of his Majesty, the lands and lordship of Versailles, consisting of an old chateau in ruins, and a farm with many buildings: the said farm comprising arable lands, meadows, woods, chestnut orchards, ponds, and other dependencies; with the homestead of Lessart, and its appurtenances, the said archbishop excepting, retaining, or reserving nothing of what he possessed at Versailles, but the said domain of Versailles, &c., to be enjoyed by his said Majesty and his successors, as private property. This sale is herein verified to be for the sum of sixty-six thousand livres, which the